

Environment and Communications References
Answers to questions on notice
Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio

Inquiry: Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding
Question No: IQ24-000051
Hearing Date: 29 February 2024
Division/Agency: Australian Antarctic Division
Topic: Meetings with TasPorts
Question Date: 29 February 2024
Question Type: Written

Senator Bilyk asked:

Referring to your evidence to the committee at the public hearing on Monday 29 January 2024, you advised the committee:

Mr Sullivan: ... Secondly, there's been a range of evidence to this inquiry, and then through the press, on the Nuyina and, in particular, lack of consultation on passage under the bridge. For the record, we began consultation on the Nuyina with the then harbourmaster in 2013-14. **The AAD met with the harbourmaster monthly during the construction build, and more often than that in 2018** [emphasis added], and they had the full construction drawings throughout the build of the ship. While there remained a residual risk with respect to going under the bridge, there was an agreed position that this was a low risk, so much so that we had conditional approval from the former harbourmaster. The criticism that's been levelled towards the Nuyina has had a significant impact on the team that worked on the ship build and for that I think it's unfair and not justified. On the contrary, the ship is a great achievement and will be the foundation of Australia in Antarctica for decades to come, and that team should be proud of their achievement. (Committee Hansard, 29 January 2024, p. 9)

TasPorts was asked to respond to this evidence and advised the committee:

TasPorts recognises abundant collaborative engagement with AAD over some 20 years to discuss current and future Hobart-based operational needs. Our records however do not support suggestions that there was a regular monthly meeting with the AAD going back to 2013-2014. (Answers to questions on notice #18, TasPorts QON 2 February 2024 (received February 2024)).

Questions on notice:

1. Please explain the discrepancy in views between TasPorts and DCCEEW on the regularity of meetings from 2013 onwards.
2. Please provide a list of all meetings between 2013-2018 between TasPorts and DCCEEW. The list should include date of meeting, attendees, method of meeting (in person, video conference etc) and where possible the key subject of the meeting.

Further, would you like an opportunity to formally provide an updated statement in relation to your evidence of Monday 29 January 2024 on the schedule of meetings with TasPorts?

Answer:

Please refer to Letter of Correction provided to the Committee Secretariat on 13 March 2024.



Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Environment and Communications Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

Updated statement of evidence – Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding

On 29 January 2024 I appeared as a witness before the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications in relation to the Inquiry into Australian Antarctic Division funding.

During the hearing I gave evidence in my opening statement in relation to consultation that occurred between the Department and TasPorts on the passage of the Nuyina under the Tasman Bridge. I said:

For the record, we began consultation on the Nuyina with the then harbourmaster in 2013-14. The AAD met with the harbourmaster monthly during the construction build, and more often than that in 2018 [emphasis added], and they had the full construction drawings throughout the build of the ship. (Committee Hansard, 29 January 2024, p. 9)

I understand that TasPorts' has responded to that evidence and advised the Committee:

TasPorts recognises abundant collaborative engagement with AAD over some 20 years to discuss current and future Hobart-based operational needs. Our records however do not support suggestions that there was a regular monthly meeting with the AAD going back to 2013-2014. ([Answers to questions on notice #18](#), TasPorts QON 2 February 2024 (received February 2024).

Following TasPorts' advice to the Committee and my further discussions with the former Manager responsible for the *Nuyina*, I wish to correct my evidence with the following:

*The AAD **met regularly**, both formally and informally, **with TasPorts** from 2013.*

As stated by TasPorts, over the past 20 years, there has been significant engagement between TasPorts and the AAD over a range of matters in relation to current and future Hobart Port requirements. Where relevant, these discussions also included the AAD's replacement icebreaker for the Aurora Australis, the RSV Nuyina, including in relation to the Hobart Port Capability, to help define functional requirements to support the design and build of the new vessel. This also included details on defined port restrictions in relation to the transit of the Tasman Bridge, which were included in the functional requirements for the new vessel.

Throughout the construction of the new vessel, the AAD and TasPorts engaged on a range of matters, primarily in relation to the planned works to be undertaken in relation to the Macquarie Wharf 6. Many of these discussions were held informally via teleconference or face-to-face without defined agendas and/or minutes, aimed at providing updates in real time on the design, construction and scheduled arrival of the new vessel into Hobart.

The remainder of my evidence given at the Hearing is correct.

I apologise for the error in my evidence and trust this further information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Sean Sullivan
Deputy Secretary
13 March 2024